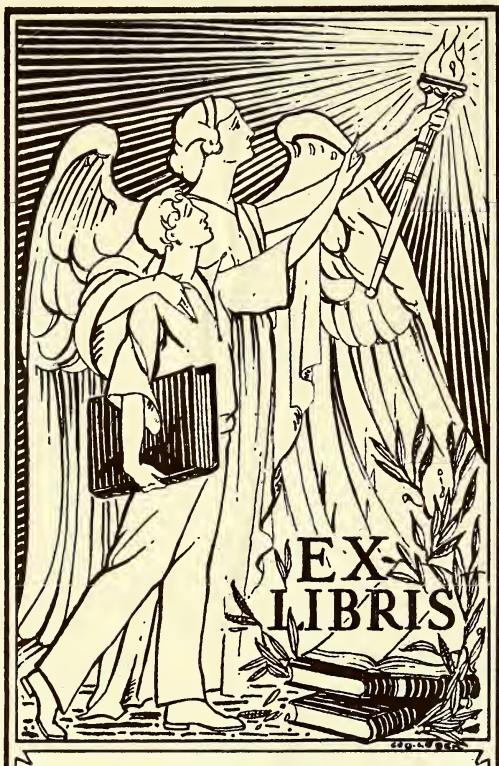


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THE SONG
OF THE STONE WALL
BY
H. C. WELLER



COME walk with me, and I will tell
What I have read in this scroll of stone;
I will spell out this writing on hill and meadow.
This is New England's entablature of rock,
Leagues upon leagues of sealed history awaiting an
interpreter.

It is a chronicle wrought by praying workmen,
The forefathers of our nation.
The walls have many things to tell me,
And the days are long. I come and listen;
My hand is upon the stones, and the tale I fain would
hear
Is of the men who built the walls,
And of the God who made the stones and the workers.

With searching feet I walk beside the wall;
I plunge and stumble over the fallen stones;
I follow the windings of the wall
Over the heaving hill, down by the meadow-brook,
Beyond the scented fields, by the marsh where rushes
grow.

On I trudge through pine woods fragrant and cool,
And emerge amid clustered pools and by rolling acres of
rye.

The wall is builded of field stones great and small,
Tumbled about by frost and storm,
Shaped and polished by ice and rain and sun;
Some flattened, grooved, and chiseled
By the inscrutable sculpture of the weather;
Some with clefts and rough edges harsh to the touch.
Gracious Time has glorified the wall
And covered the historian stones with a mantle of green;

The sunbeams flit and waver in the rifts,
Vanish and reappear, linger and sleep,
Conquer with radiance the obdurate angles,
Filter between the naked rents and wind-bleached jags.

I understand the triumph and the truth
Wrought into these walls of rugged stone.
They are a miracle of patient hands,
They are a victory of suffering, a pæan of pain.
All pangs of death, all cries of birth,
Are in the mute, moss-covered stones;
They are eloquent to my hands.
O beautiful, blind stones, inarticulate and dumb!
In the deep gloom of their hearts there is a gleam
Of the primeval sun which looked upon them
When they were begotten.
So in the heart of man shines forever
A beam from the everlasting sun of God.
Unresponsive, rude are the stones;
Yet in them divine things lie concealed.
I hear their imprisoned chant:

“We are fragments of the universe,
Chips of the rock whereon God laid the foundation of
the world;
Out of immemorial chaos He wrought us.
Out of the sun, out of the tempest, out of the travail of
the earth, we grew.
We are wonderfully mingled of life and death;
We serve as crypts for innumerable, unnoticed, tiny
forms.
We are manifestations of the Might
That rears the granite hills unto the clouds
And sows the tropic seas with coral isles.
We are shot through and through with hidden color;
A thousand hues are blended in our gray substance.
Sapphire, turquoise, ruby, opal,
Emerald, diamond, amethyst, are our sisters from the
beginning;
And our brothers are iron, lead, zinc,
Copper, and silver, and gold.
We are the dust of continents past and to come,
We are a deathless frieze carved with man’s destiny;
In us is the record sibylline of far events.

We are as old as the world ; our birth was before the hills.
We are the cup that holds the sea, and the framework of the peak that parts the sky.
When chaos shall again return,
And endless night shall spread her wings upon a ruined world,
We alone shall stand up from the shattered earth,
Indestructible, invincible witnesses of God's eternal purpose."

In reflective mood by the wall I wander,
The hoary stones have set my heart astir ;
My thoughts take shape and move beside me in the guise
Of the stern men who built the wall in early, ooden days.
One by one the melancholy phantoms go stepping from me,
And I follow them in and out among the stones.
I think of the days long gone,
Flown like birds beyond the ramparts of the world.
The patient, sturdy men who piled the stones
Have vanished, like the days, beyond the bounds
Of earth and mortal things.
From their humble, steadfast lives has sprung the greatness of my nation.
I am bone of their bone, breath of their breath ;
Their courage is in my soul.
The wall is an Iliad of granite : it chants to me
Of pilgrims of the perilous deep,
Of fearless journeyings, and old, forgotten things.
The blood of grim ancestors warms the fingers
That trace the letters of their story ;
My pulses beat in unison with pulses that are stilled ;
The fire of their zeal inspires me
In my struggle with darkness and pain.
These embossed books, unobliterated by the tears and laughter of Time,
Are signed with the vital hands of undaunted men.
I love these monoliths, so crudely imprinted
With their stalwart, cleanly, frugal lives.

From my seat among the stones I stretch my hand and touch
My friend the elm, urn-like, lithesome, tall ;

Far above the reach of my exploring fingers
Birds are singing and winging joyously
Through leafy billows of green.
The elm-tree's song is wondrous sweet;
The words are the ancientest language of trees:
They tell how earth and air and light
Are wrought anew to beauty and to fruitfulness.
I feel the glad stirrings under her rough bark;
Her living sap mounts up to bring forth leaves;
Her great limbs thrill beneath the wand of spring.

This wall was builded in our fathers' days—
Valorous days when life was lusty and the land was new.
Resemble the walls the builders, buffeted, stern, and
worn.

To us they left the law,
Order, simplicity, obedience,
And the wall is the bond they gave the nation
At its birth of courage and unflinching faith.

The apple-tree by the wall sheds its blossoms about me—
A shower of petals of light upon darkness.
From Nature's brimming cup I drink a thousand scents;
At noon the wizard sun stirs the hot soil under the pines.
I take the top stone of the wall in my hands
And the sun in my heart;
I feel the rippling land extend to right and left,
Bearing up a receptive surface to my uncertain feet;
I clamber up the hill and beyond the grassy sweep;
I encounter a chaos of tumbled rocks:
Piles of shadow they seem, huddling close to the land.
Here they are scattered like sheep,
Or like great birds at rest;
There a huge block juts from the giant wave of the hill.
At the foot of the aged pines the maiden's moccasins
Track the sod like the noiseless sandals of Spring.
Out of chinks in the wall delicate grasses wave,
As beauty grew out of the crannies of those hard souls.

Beauty was at their feet, and their eyes beheld it;
The earth cried out for labor, and they gave it.
But ever as they saw the budding spring,

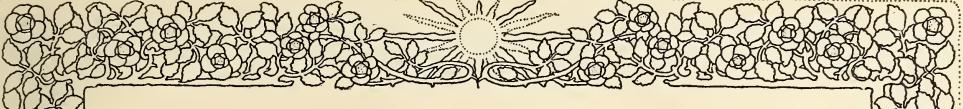


"THE APPLE-TREE BY THE WALL SHEDS ITS BLOSSOMS ABOUT ME"



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Ever as they cleared the stubborn field,
Ever as they piled the heavy stones,
In mystic visions they saw the eternal spring.
They raised their hardened hands above the earth,
And beheld the walls that are not built of stone,
The portals opened by angels whose garments are of
light;
And beyond the radiant walls of living stones
They dreamed vast meadows and hills of
fadeless green.

In the old house across the road
With weather-beaten front, like the furrowed face of an
old man,
The lights are out forever, the windows are broken,
And the oaken posts are warped;
The storms beat into the rooms as the passion of the
world
Racked and buffeted those who once dwelt in them.
The psalm and the morning prayer are silent;
But the walls remain visible witnesses of faith
That knew no wavering or shadow of turning.
They have withstood sun and northern blast,
They have outlasted the unceasing strife
Of forces leagued to tear them down.
Under the stars and the clouds, under the summer sun,
Beaten by rain and wind, covered with tender vines,
The walls stand symbols of a granite race,
The measure and translation of olden times.

In the rough epic of their life, their toil, their creeds,
Their psalms, their prayers, what stirring tales
Of days that were their past had they to tell
Their children to keep the new faith burning?
Tales of grandsires in the fatherland
Whose faith was seven times tried in fiery furnaces,—
Of Rowland Taylor who kissed the stake,
And stood with hands folded and eyes steadfastly turned
To the sky, and smiled upon the flames:
Of Latimer and of Cranmer who for cowardice
heroically atoned—
Who thrust his right hand into the fire
Because it had broken plight with his heart
And written against the voice of his conviction.



With such memories they exalted and cherished
The heroism of their tried souls,
And ours are wrung with doubt and self-distrust!

I am kneeling on the odorous earth;
The sweet, shy feet of Spring come tripping o'er the land;
Winter is fled to the hills, leaving snowy wreaths
On apple-tree, meadow, and marsh.
The walls are astir; little waves of blue
Run through my fingers, murmuring,
"We follow the winds and the snow!"
Their heart is a cup of gold.
Soft whispers of showers and flowers
Are mingled in the spring song of the walls.
Hark to the songs that go singing like the wind
Through the chinks of the wall and thrill the heart
And quicken it with passionate response!
The walls sing the song of wild bird, the hoof-beat of
deer,
The murmur of pine and cedar, the ripple of many
streams;
Crows are calling from the druidical wood;
The morning mist still haunts the meadows,
Like the ghosts of the wall-builders.

As I listen, methinks I hear the bitter plaint
Of the passing of a haughty race,
The wronged, friendly, childlike, peaceable tribes,
The swarthy archers of the wilderness;
The red men to whom Nature opened all her secrets,
Who knew the haunts of bird and fish,
The hidden virtue of herb and root.
All the travail of man and beast they knew—
Birth and death, heat and cold,
Hunger and thirst, love and hate.
For these are the unchanging things writ in the
imperishable book of life
That man suckled at the breast of woman must know.

In the dim sanctuary of the pines
The winds murmur their mysteries through dusky
aisles—
Secrets of earth's renewal and the endless cycle of life.
Living things are afoot among the grasses:

The closed fingers of the ferns unfold,
New bees explore new flowers, and the brook
Pours virgin waters from the rushing founts of May.
In the old walls there are sinister voices—
The groans of women charged with witchcraft.
I see a lone, gray, haggard woman standing at bay,
Helpless against her grim, sin-darkened judges.
Terror blanches her lips and makes her confess
Bonds with demons that her heart knows not ;
Satan sits by the judgment-seat and laughs.
The gray walls, broken, weather-worn oracles,
Sing that she was once a girl of love and laughter,
Then a fair mother with lullabies on her lips,
Caresses in her eyes, who spent her days
In weaving warmth to keep her brood against the winter
cold.
And in her tongue was the law of kindness ;
For her God was the Lord Jehovah.
Enemies uprose and swore her accursed,
Laid at her door the writhing forms of children,
And she could but answer, "The evil one
Torments them in my shape."
She stood amazed before the tribunal of her church,
And heard the gates of God's house closed against
her.
Oh, shuddering the silence of the throng,
And fearful the words spoken from the judgment-seat !
She raised her white head and clasped her wrinkled
hands :
"Pity me, Lord ! pity my anguish !
Nor, since Thou art a just and terrible God,
Forget to visit Thy wrath upon these people ;
For they have sworn away the life of Thy servant
Who hath lived long in the land, keeping Thy
commandments.
I am old, Lord, and betrayed ;
By neighbor and kin am I betrayed ;
A Judas's kiss hath marked me for a witch.
Possessed of a devil ? Here be a legion of devils !
Smite them, O God ! Yea, utterly destroy them that
persecute the innocent !"
Before this mother in Israel the judges cowered ;
But still they suffered her to die.
Through the tragic, guilty walls I hear the sighs
Of desolate women and penitent, remorseful men.

Sing of happier themes, O many-voiced epic—
Sing how the ages, like thrifty husbandmen, winnow the
creeds of men,
And leave only faith and love and truth.
Sing of the Puritan's nobler nature,
Fathomless as the forests he felled,
Irresistible as the winds that blow.
His trenchant conviction was but the somber bulwark
Which guarded his pure ideal.

• • • • •

O eloquent, sane walls, instinct with a new faith,
Ye are barbarous, incongruous, but great with the
greatness of reality.
Walls wrought in unfaltering effort,
Sing of our prosperity, the joyous harvest
Of the labor of lusty toilers.
Down through the years comes the ring of their
victorious axes:
Ye are Titans of the forest, but we are stronger;
Ye are strong with the strength of mighty winds,
But we are strong with the unconquerable strength of
souls.”
Still the young race, unassailable, inviolate,
Shakes the solitudes with the strokes of creation;
Doubly strong we renew the valorous days,
And like a measureless sea we overflow
The fresh green, benevolent West,
The buoyant, fruitful West that dares and sings.
Pure, dew-dripping walls that guard
The quiet, lovable, fertile fields,
Sing praises to Him who from the mossy rocks
Can bid the fountains leap in thirsty lands.
I walk beside the stones through the young grain;
Through waves of wheat that billow about my knees;
The wall contests the onward march of the wheat;
But the wheat is charged with the life of the world;
Its force is irresistible; onward it sweeps,
An engulfing tide, over all the land
Till hill and valley, field and plain,
Are flooded with its green felicity.
Out of the moist earth it has sprung;
In the gracious amplitudes of her bosom it was nurtured,
And in it was wrought the miracle of life.

Sing, prophetic, mystic walls, of the dreams of the
builders!

Sing in thundering tones that shall thrill us
To try our dull discontent, our barren wisdom,
Against their propagating, unquenchable, questionless
visions.

Sing in rernerving refrain of the resolute men,
Each a Lincoln in his smoldering patience,
Each a Luther in his fearless faith,
Who made a breach in the wall of darkness
And let the hosts of liberty march through.

Calm, eternal walls, tranquil, mature,
Which old voices, old songs, old kisses cover,
As mosses and lichens cover your ancient stones,
Teach me the secret of your serene repose ;
Tell of the greater things to be,
When love and wisdom are the only creed,
And law and right are one.

Sing that the Lord cometh, the Lord cometh,
The fountain-head and spring of life ;
Sing, steady, exultant walls, in strains hallowed and
touched with fire —

Sing that the Lord will build us all together,
As living stones build us, cemented together.
May He who knoweth every pleasant thing
That our sires forewent to teach the peoples law and
truth,
Who counted every stone blessed by their consecrated
hands,
Grant that we remain liberty-loving, substantial,
elemental,
And that faith, the rock not fashioned of human hands,
Be the stability of our triumphant, toiling days !

A MOTOR INVASION OF NORWAY

BY CAROLINE THURBER

BETWEEN the two ways of entering Norway with an automobile, namely, by boat or by wagon-road, we chose the latter, to our lasting regret. Under the inspiring influence of the Napoleonic highways of Denmark, we had crossed into Sweden, at Helsingborg, in airy disbelief of the current rumors that Swedish roads are bad.

The period of our content was brief. Our trip of about three hundred miles across the southwest part of Sweden had little to redeem it from the misery of atrocious roads,—the occasion of unending tire trouble,—intersecting trails, unmarked and meaningless, which continually misled us, and abominable food and lodgings for motor as well as for man. Our relief, as we at last glided into Christiania on a beautiful July night, may be imagined.

Once in the comely Norwegian capital, we put ourselves and our proposed trip entirely in the hands of the secretary of the newly formed "Autoklub" of Norway. But for his kind assistance, we should hardly have gotten far from Christiania. The consensus of opinion was that our plan was one impossible to carry out; but as no one had ever taken an automobile over the ground which we purposed to compass, we felt that we might safely turn pioneers and go ahead, secure in the knowledge that obstacles usually grow less upon approach.

Our first step was to procure motoring permits from the governors of the various districts or counties through which we wished to pass, as each governor has absolute power to admit automobiles to his territory or to exclude them at will. Then, as Norway's gasolene stations appeared to be rarer than orchids, we ordered our own supplies of the precious fluid shipped to various points along our proposed route. In addition, we cut down our baggage to

the minimum, and so loaded up the trunk-rack and running-boards with surplus gasolene, in the flaming red cans prescribed by law, that a sarcastic native, with some experience of Dakota life and language, watching to see us start, was moved to drawl out, "Nex' tam you better do your explore on elephant; he easier fed."

En route to the Telemarken Valley, before we had yet reached the wilds, we fell in with a little, gnarled old man, who greeted us with apparent rapture as his eye fell upon a fluttering pennant of the University of Chicago. We had unwittingly chosen a sure passport. Throughout Norway we had only to display that talismanic name "Chicago," and on the highest mountain as well as in the remotest valley the American tongue responded. It was in accents which again suggested our own far Northwest that our new-found friend addressed us: "After all your trouble, the scenery in Norway ain't nothin' but mountains and bogs, woods and waterfalls." Then looking skeptically at our machine, he added: "You can't do it, anyway. The hills are too steep, the roads are too narrow, and the mountain ponies will jump off any precipice at sight of you." There remained one comfort: we might be spared starvation. Although towns were few, we should find skyds-stations, or post-houses, not more than a dozen miles apart on all our route, and these are obliged by law to feed and lodge all travelers.

One county permit was lacking, and it was at Notoddan that we had hoped to be overtaken by the necessary telegram of consent. Finding no word there, we replenished our gasolene supply at a factory that seems to monopolize the common atmosphere by making saltpeter largely from the air under a patented process, and with some misgivings pushed on.

